

REMARKS

Applicants submit this Amendment in reply to the Office Action dated January 18, 2004. As an initial matter, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for conducting a personal interview with Applicants' representative on March 3, 2004. The subject matter discussed during the personal interview is included in this Amendment.

In this Amendment, Applicants have amended claims 5, 6, and 10, and added new claim 15 to more clearly define the claimed invention. Claims 5, 6, and 10 are the sole independent claims.

Before entry of this Amendment, claims 2-14 were pending in this application. After entry of this Amendment, claims 2-15 are pending in this application.

The originally-filed specification, claims, abstract, and drawings fully support the subject matter of amended claims 5, 6, and 10 and new claim 15. No new matter was introduced.

On pages 2-4 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 5-7 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,351,582 to Emerson et al. ("Emerson"), and rejected claims 2-4, 8-9, and 11-13 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Emerson in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,123,566 to Daoud et al. ("Daoud"). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections. No proper combination of the cited references, including Emerson and Daoud, discloses or suggests the present invention as claimed in each of independent claim 5, 6, and 10.

For example, independent claim 5 recites a wire connecting connector including, among other aspects, "a terminal receptor between the tip end and the base end, the terminal receptor configured to grip the protruding male terminal." In another example,

independent claims 6 and 10 each recite a wire connecting connector including, among other aspects, "wherein the protruding male terminal and the protruding female terminal are configured to conduct electricity." Neither Emerson nor Daoud, whether viewed individually or in combination, discloses or suggests at least these aspects of the claimed invention either alone or in combination with the other aspects of the claimed invention.

The Examiner alleges that the pair of prongs 14, 16 of Emerson, and more specifically the upper ends of those prongs 19, 21, are configured to receive the "bumps" between the downwardly facing transverse grooves 62. This allegation is made, despite the fact that the two rows of vertically extending slots 63, 64 prevent contact between the pair prongs 14, 16 and any portion of the downwardly facing transverse grooves 62. Nevertheless, in the interests of expediting the prosecution of this application, Applicants have amended independent claim 5 to clarify that "the terminal receptor [is] configured to grip the protruding male terminal." Accordingly, even assuming *arguendo* that the "bumps" between the downwardly facing transverse grooves 62 extend between the pair of prongs 14, 16, the pair of prongs 14, 16 do not grip any portion of the downwardly facing transverse grooves 62, as the upper ends of the prongs 19, 21 would prevent the "bumps" between the downwardly facing transverse grooves 62 from extending far enough between the pair of prongs 14, 16 so that they could be gripped. Moreover, Daoud does not remedy at least this deficiency of Emerson. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of independent claim 5 and its respective dependent claims.

The Examiner alleges that the pair of prongs 14, 16 and the downwardly facing transverse grooves 62 correspond to the protruding male terminal and the protruding female terminal, or vice versa. Even assuming arguendo that such a characterization is correct, neither Emerson nor Daoud discloses or suggests that “the protruding male terminal and the protruding female terminal are configured to conduct electricity” as recited in independent claims 6 and 10. Indeed, as shown by the cross-hatching in Fig. 7, the downwardly facing transverse grooves 62, which are a portion of clamp cap 58, are made of a foam or other synthetic resin. Moreover, Emerson teaches against configuring the clamp cap 58 to conduct electricity, as doing so could create an electrical connection between various pairs of prongs 14, 16 and potentially create a short-circuit, impermissibly rendering the prior art invention being modified unsatisfactory for its intended purpose, In re Gordon, 733 F.2d 900, 221 USPQ 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1984), and impermissibly changing the principle of operation of the prior art invention being modified, In re Ratti, 270 F.2d 810, 123 USPQ 349 (CCPA 1959). Furthermore, Daoud does not remedy at least this deficiency of Emerson. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of each of independent claims 6 and 10 and their respective dependent claims.

Applicants further submit that claims 2-4, 5-9, and 11-15 depend from one of independent claims 5, 6, and 10, and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons that each of those respective independent claims is allowable. In addition, at least some of the dependent claims recite unique combinations that are neither taught nor suggested by the cited references, and therefore at least some also are separately patentable.

In view of the foregoing remarks, this claimed invention, as amended, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration and reexamination of the application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

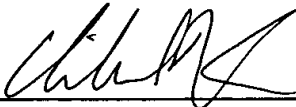
In discussing the specification, claims, abstract, and drawings in this Amendment, it is to be understood that Applicants are in no way intending to limit the scope of the claims to any exemplary embodiments described in the specification or abstract and/or shown in the drawings. Rather, Applicants are entitled to have the claims interpreted broadly, to the maximum extent permitted by statute, regulation, and applicable case law.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: March 18, 2004

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